



# Lifestyle

## DOWN BEAT DOWN LOAD

By Darryn Simmons  
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photo by Claudia B. Laws

These days, downloading or sampling music can get you sued -- unless you're dealing with Elbert Montgomery Jr. and his label, Around the World Records. Montgomery, who goes by the recording name EMJ, encourages fellow musicians to download his music and use it in their songs -- for a price. He's a producer who offers licensing agreements for his beats through his Web site. "It's something I started in late 2001," Montgomery said. "As word got out, it became sensible to put the beats on the Web site." Aspiring artists who are looking for beats to go with their lyrics can go on the Around The World Records' Web site at [www.aroundtheworldrecords.com](http://www.aroundtheworldrecords.com) and listen to samples of some of the beats that the label has to offer. If the musicians hear something they like, they can enter into an exclusive licensing agreement with the label -- which means they get exclusive first right to use that beat. "You become the first person to use that beat and you have one year to use it," Montgomery said. "If you don't use it within that time, you won't be able to use it again unless you sign another one-year agreement." Once an artist uses a beat, the label has the right to let anyone else use it. Montgomery said it's important for aspiring artists in the music business to learn the difference between licensing and purchasing beats. "It's like buying a car," Montgomery explained. "You pay more when you buy a car, but licensing is like making payments where you pay less." The cost of licensing a beat from Around the World differs depending on the kind of artist. For an unsigned artist, the cost is \$200 per beat. For an artist signed to an independent record label, the price is \$500 per beat and 3 percent of the gross revenues generated from the sales of any song with the beat. Major label artists must pay \$1,000 per beat, plus 3 percent of the gross. So far, the system has worked well. "We've had the beats page up on the Web site for a month and we're steadily getting around 20 hits a day," Montgomery said. "Licensing beats has become the bulk of the label's revenue." The idea to go into beat licensing was a gradual process, Montgomery said. "We started out as strictly a studio and renting time out," he said. "More and more we had rappers coming in with lyrics but no beats." The label started making beats for the artists. They started out with short-term licensing agreements and eventually moved into one-year deals so artists couldn't sit on beats for extended periods of time.

Aspiring artist Brandy Brown (stage name: "Roxxy") and Guy Jones (stage name: "Wolf") are two artists who have used Elbert Montgomery's beats. Jones said he was impressed by the quality of Montgomery's beat

## Record producer hopes beat-selling Web site becomes 'one-stop shop'



photo by Claudia B. Laws

Elbert Montgomery Jr. Known as "EMJ" runs the Around The World Records label based in Montgomery, AL. The label mainly works with artist collaborations and offers beats online for other aspiring artists.

Of course, the process has some problems -- "When you create a beat, it's like your baby, so it's sometimes hard to give it away," Montgomery said. Like when Montgomery creates a beat that he really likes and wants to keep. "But when someone takes the beat and is successful with it, it's a thrill too." Montgomery said he's licensed beats to around 15 artists. He's also done collaborations with other artists using his beats. "I release a lot of solo projects, so to work with others and in different music genres makes me better as a producer." EMJ is the only artist on the Around the World label. Two local artists who have utilized Montgomery's beats and collaborated with him are Guy Jones, who goes by the stage name WOLF, and Brandy Brown, who goes by the stage name Roxxy and is part of the duo Mos Hygh. "He (Montgomery) is very creative with his beats," Jones said. "You don't hear similarities because they're not the norm." Brown agreed. "His beats are like the name of his label -- they're around the world," she said. "They're not all Southern beats and thugged out." Jones also was impressed with the quality of the beats -- especially their clarity and lack of feedback. Those like Jones and Brown who collaborate with Montgomery also get more than just his beats. They also get promotional help. Montgomery takes the songs he does and makes the performer a featured artist on his Web site. He also sends the songs out to his 5,000-person e-mail list that includes producers, label employees, radio personnel and more. "He's very professional," Brown said. "He has a lot of knowledge of the business level of the game." Montgomery wants to continue to make his Web site a "one-stop shop" for aspiring artists, and he's looking to move into other music genres. Right now his beats are primarily hip-hop, but he plans to have gospel, pop and rock beats available in the near future. "When I put out songs, next week I want them on radio," he said. "I think this Web site will help."